

*THE BICENTENARY FESTIVAL
OF THE SOCIETY FOR
THE PROPAGATION OF THE GOSPEL.*

A SERMON

PREACHED IN TRINITY CHURCH, ST. JOHN,

BY

THE RIGHT REVEREND

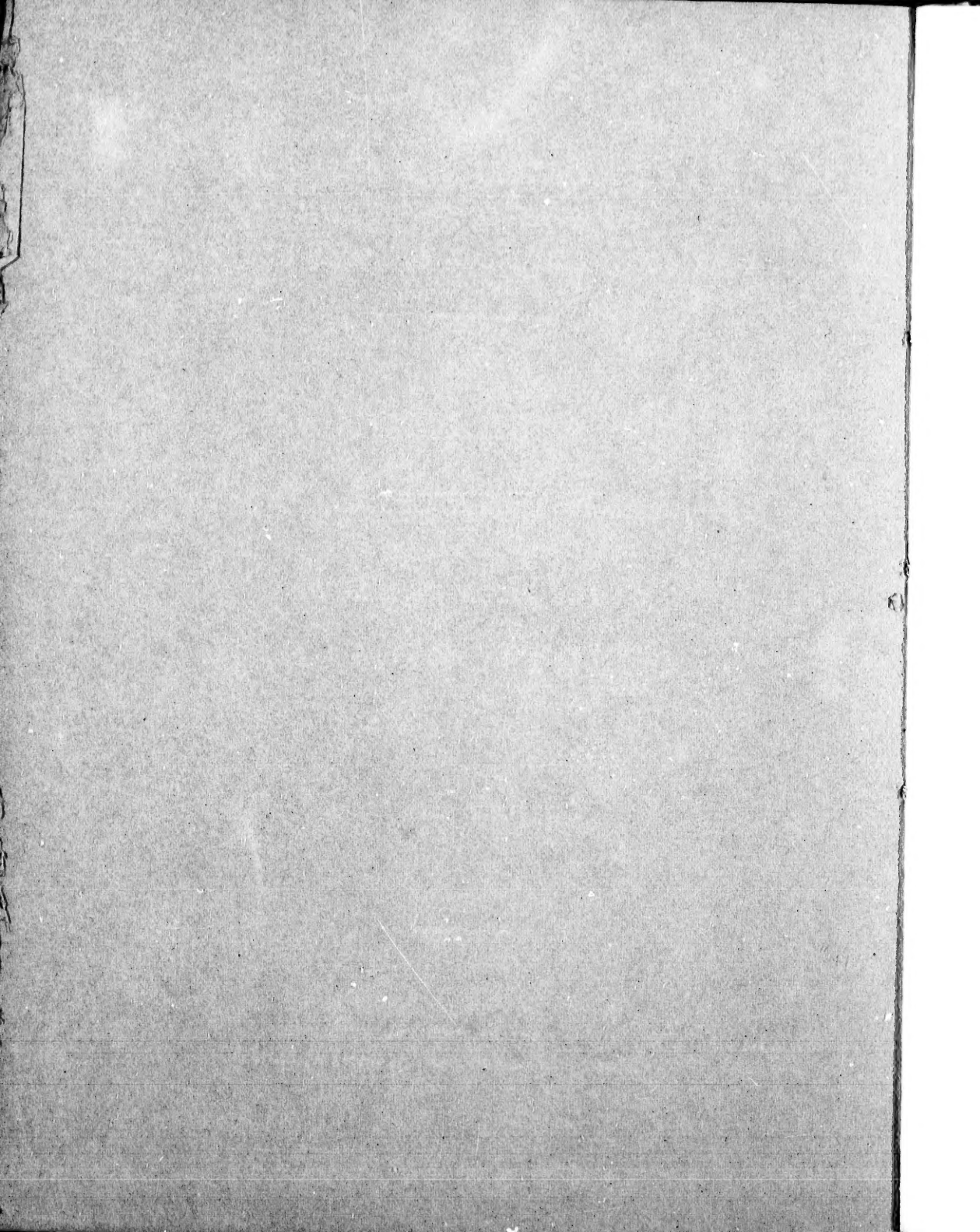
ROBERT CODMAN, JR.

Bishop of Maine.

ON JULY 5TH, 1900.

SAINT JOHN, N. B.
THE SAINT JOHN GLOBE PUBLISHING COMPANY, LIMITED.
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Directly after the delivery of this sermon in the Vestry of Trinity Church, on the motion of Rev. CANON ROBERTS, it was resolved: "That the thanks of the clergy here assembled be given to the Bishop of Maine for his sermon."

Thereupon, on the motion of the Very Reverend DEAN PARTRIDGE, it was resolved: "That the Bishop of Maine be respectfully requested to allow his sermon to be published."

The clergy were assembled for Synod, before whom the sermon was preached.

July 5, 1900.

"The Lord hath made bare His Holy Arm in the eyes of all the nations: and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God."

— Isaiah 52: 10.

IT is a common notion among Protestants that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is simply the story printed and told in the Bible, and if only a soul will listen to that story, or read it for himself and believe it, he is saved by that act of faith. This narrow conception of the Gospel brings with it a narrow conception of mission work. Hence it is a common notion among Protestants that mission work consists in the distribution of Bibles and the sending out of missionaries to teach and explain the story. Bibles have been printed in all languages and distributed far and wide, and missionaries have been sent out, educated and not educated, commissioned and not commissioned, to preach the written word. A large part of the mission work of these last three centuries has been carried on upon this narrow and half true conception of the Gospel. Jesus Christ has been preached,

converts have indeed been made, sinners have been brought to the Cross. Good work has been done. For to hold up Christ crucified will draw all men unto Him. But such preaching of only part of the truth ever fails to accomplish that fixed and permanent work which is the fruit of the whole gospel. It was not enough that the Good Samaritan had compassion for the man who fell among thieves; it was not enough that he bound up the wounds, pouring in oil and wine, but he must set him on his own beast and bring him to an inn where the poor man was to be provided for until the Saviour returned again. It is true that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of mankind and seeks to save us all, but it is equally true that Christ has provided a church where we are all to be cared for. The Church of Christ is more than the company of believers. She is that great visible body which from the Apostolic times until to-day is not only preaching the Gospel out of the Bible, but is also baptizing, educating, confirming by the laying on of hands, celebrating the Holy Eucharist, visiting the

sick, burying the dead, training and educating its ministry in the faith, and sending them forth with the Apostolic commission and power; an active working body doing the work of Christ even in the midst of persecution, heresy, corruption, and schism, and yet from first to last under the control and direction of the Historic Episcopate, the Bishops in the Apostolic Succession. Such is the church from a practical point of view. She not only preaches the Gospel as well, if not better, than our sectarian brethren, but like the Good Samaritan, she gathers all who accept Christ into an inn or institution where all may be spiritually cared for.

When, oh when, will our sectarian brethren learn that the Gospel is not only Christ the Saviour but Christ the Saviour and the saving church. Prior to the Reformation all Christians were gathered into this one fold under the Bishops. Since the Reformation some have followed the ideas of one reformer, others another, and their descendants have been constantly trying to improve upon the ideas thus received. For

these there must ever be a weary doctrinal wrangle as to which reformer is nearest to the truth, but the Church of England followed no reformer. The institution was under the Bishops before the Reformation. It was reformed by the Bishops. It remained under the Bishops, and thus the Church of England has gone on doing the same Gospel work, that is, not only preaching, but baptizing, educating, confirming, celebrating the Eucharist, visiting the sick, burying the dead, training and sending out its ministry with the same Apostolic ordination, commission and power. By her daily life and work, by her ministry, her creeds, and her liturgy, she bears the best possible witness to the fact that she is a true branch of the one Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church—one with the historic Churches of Rome, Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria, and Constantinople, and essentially different from the Protestant denominations around her.

But it is in her missionary efforts that the Church of England has best learned the need and the value of the Episcopal

organization. For nearly two centuries she was deprived of the blessing and power of the Episcopate in the mission field. She was deprived of this privilege by the cowardice of English politicians who dared not face the Puritan opposition.

As we study the history of English missions it certainly does seem as if the Devil feared the Bishops, and as we mark the enormous growth and influence which the missionary Bishops have accomplished, we may well see that the Devil had good reason to fear.

Attempts were made from time to time in the seventeenth century to get the consent of Parliament for sending Bishops into the mission fields. But the struggle was renewed with energy by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts soon after its organization. Its first report (1704) stated that "earnest addresses" had been received "from divers parts of the continent, and islands adjacent, for a Suffragan to visit the several churches; ordain some, confirm others, and bless all." In these days we are so accustomed to the

blessings of an Episcopal administration that we little realize what their loss would be or how sorely the colonists suffered. Their cries went up to the Throne on high. The Bishop of Bishops heard their prayers. The society received their appeals and labored hard to get the necessary vote from Parliament. But the Puritans spared no effort to oppose them, and the weak politicians, seeking their own gain rather than the spread of Christ's kingdom, yielded to the Puritan opposition. Again and again the churchmen in the colonies pleaded for a Bishop; again and again the society sought for the necessary Parliamentary consent; again and again the Puritans roused their bitter opposition, and again and again the politicians sought their own gain and sold the interests of their church.

Listen to one of the appeals coming from a missionary in New Jersey in 1716:

"The poor Church of God here in the wilderness. There is none to guide her among all the sons that she has brought forth, nor is there any that takes her by the hand of all the sons that she has brought

up. When the Apostles heard that Samaria had received the Word of God, immediately they sent out two of the chiefs, Peter and John, to lay their hands on them and pray that they might receive the Holy Ghost. They did not stay for a secular design of salary. And when the Apostles heard that the Word of God was preached at Antioch presently they sent out Paul and Barnabas to confirm the disciples, and so the churches were established in the faith and increased in number daily. And when Paul did but dream that a man from Macedonia called him, he set all sail so fast and went over himself to help them. But we have been here these twenty years calling till our hearts ache, and ye own, 'tis the call and cause of God, and yet ye have not heard, or have not answered, and that is all one." . . . "I don't pretend to prophesy," the writer continues, "but you know how it is said, the Kingdom of God shall be taken from them and given to a nation that will bring forth the fruits of it."

Mark this good man's warning. "God's call" he describes the appeal, and if Eng-

land declines to answer, God may take from her the American colonies.

The delay was not for want of a salary for a Bishop. For long before a Bishop was procured the society had secured provision for his maintainance. Archbishop Tenison, in 1717, and an unknown benefactor in 1727, gave £1000 each for this object. Mr. Dugald Campbell, in 1720, and Lady Elizabeth Hastings, in 1741, gave £500 each. Other contributions were also received.

Nor was the delay due to any lack of energetic effort on the part of the English Bishops. On the contrary the reproach was hurled against them as preachers of the anniversary sermons for the society—for perpetually ringing changes on the necessity of a Bishop in the colonies. To this charge Dr. Chandler replied: "I will tell him for his comfort that these changes will continue to be rung, and that this object will be perpetually aimed at until the desired Episcopate shall be granted."

The true reason why the Bishop of London was opposed and defeated in his

scheme of sending Bishops is thus stated by Dr. Chandler to Dr. Johnson: "It seems that the Duke of Newcastle, Mr. Pelham, and Mr. Onslow can have the interest and the votes of the whole body of dissenters upon condition of their befriending them; and by their influence on those persons, the ministry was brought to oppose it." Again, in 1745, Bishop Secker (then of Oxford) writes: "We have done all we can here in vain, and must wait for more favorable times. . . . So long as they (the dissenters) are uneasy and remonstrate, regard will be paid to them and their friends here by our ministers of state."

The attitude of the Puritans toward the Episcopate was both brutal and bitter. "Our Bishops," say they, "and proud, popish, presumptuous, paltry, pestilent, and pernicious prelates, are usurpers. They are cogging and cozening knaves. The Bishops will lie like dogs, impudent, shameless, wainscotfaced Bishops. Your fat places are anti-Christian; they are limbs of anti-Christ." "This," says Bishop Wilberforce, "is not the language of men seeking tole-

ration under religious scruples, but of coarse and open assailants of existing institutions." With less coarseness of tongue, but certainly with no less rancour, John Milton dooms the Bishops of the English Church, "after a shameful life in this world, to the darkest and deepest gulf of Hell, where, under despiteful control, the trample and spurn of all the other damned, who in the anguish of their torture shall have no other ease than to exercise a raving and bestial tyranny over them, as their slaves and negroes, they shall remain in that plight forever, the basest, the lowermost, the most dejected, the most underfoot and down-trodden vassals of perdition." (Milton's Treatise on Reformation, 1 to 274).

Thus through the cowardice of English politicians, catering to that bitter, narrow-minded feeling of the dissenters in order to secure their political influence, the colonies were deprived for nearly a hundred years before the American Revolution of the blessings of the Episcopate. Children were not baptized, communion was not administered for lack of clergy, confirmation was not

conferred, candidates for holy orders could not be ordained for want of Bishops. Dissent triumphed. Parishes built up fell to pieces, missions started and failed. There was no order, no unity, no permanency in the work for want of a Bishop. Noble, however, were the efforts of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel during that sad period. Its attention was particularly directed to mission work in the American colonies. Virginia and Maryland were settled by church people, and therefore better supplied with clergy. The society, for that reason, turned its attention to the other colonies, though it was to Maryland that Dr. Bray was sent, and through that mission inspired with the thought which led to the organization of the society.

In Pennsylvania and Delaware the society assisted in maintaining forty-seven missionaries and planting twenty-four central stations. In New Jersey the society assisted in maintaining forty-four missionaries and planting twenty-seven central stations. In New York the society assisted in maintaining fifty-eight missionaries and

planting twenty-three central stations. In New England, where dissent was the strongest and most bitter, the society assisted in maintaining eighty-four missionaries and planting eighty central stations. And all this time the society was maintaining mission work in Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, and elsewhere. It is impossible to estimate the debt which the Church in the United States owes to the society. All the American Bishops have tried their best to express our gratitude, and we join most heartily in this jubilee, rejoicing together with the rest of the Anglican Communion over the glorious record the society has made and is now making.

My own Diocese of Maine owes a part of this debt. The early history of the church in Maine is enveloped in some obscurity. Undoubtedly the services of the Church of England were offered as early as 1607 at the mouth of the Kennebec river. But at some early date the country was settled by an overflow of Puritans from the Massachusetts colony, bringing with them and bequeathing to their descendants the

Puritan suspicion of Episcopacy. In 1755 there were churchmen at the spot now called Dresden, near to Fort Richmond, who applied to the society for a minister. The Rev. William McClanahan was sent but soon left discouraged and went to Pennsylvania. Again the church people at Dresden applied to the society, and the Rev. Jacob Bailey was sent out in 1760. The church was built in 1770. The place was then called Pownalborough. He carried his ministrations as far east as Falmouth, now Portland. Mr. Bailey was too much of a Royalist, and he was obliged to leave and seek safety in Halifax. But Dresden still has a church where the church services are held, though the congregation is very small.

But what would have been the work of the society in its missions if only the English politicians had done their duty and Bishops had been sent into the American colonies. Perhaps it would have been a fearful struggle in New England, where a declaration of independence would have been drawn up long before 1776. But the church

would have grown and prospered in the rest of the colonies, and another and more powerful bond would have united them to the mother country. Their loyalty to the English crown might have prevented the loss of so large a territory.

Was God's hand in all this history? God heard the cry of His people for a shepherd. God brought home that cry to the English authorities. The politicians who held the power sought rather their own personal gain, and for the sake of peace with the dissenters sold the interest of their church. At length God's patience was exhausted. He snatched the American colonies from the grasp of England. The price for which the politicians sold the church was taken from their hands. But all reason for withholding the Episcopate was also taken away, and soon after the American revolution Parliament gave its consent, and Bishops were consecrated, both for America and for the colonies. The first colonial Bishop was sent here to Nova Scotia and New Brunswick in 1787, and from that day to this the work of the Society for the Propagation of

the Gospel in Foreign Parts has been little short of the miraculous.

For want of Bishops a large part of the work in the American colonies failed and died with that generation. At the commencement of the American war the society was helping to support seventy-seven missionaries in the United States. But they had no status in the country, and as the rebellion progressed nearly all of them were forced to retire from their missions, and the church in the United States almost perished. But God did not desert us. Scotland, however, not England, has the credit of giving us our first Bishop.

The lesson has been taught so clearly that the whole world can see and hear that without the Episcopate Christ's work is unsteady and without permanency. With the Episcopate its growth is little short of miraculous. "The Lord hath laid bare His Holy Arm in the eyes of all nations: and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God."

We can thank the society for the help sent to our churchmen in those early days

in America. But we can also congratulate the society that their long and persistent efforts have been rewarded at last, and that they have obtained the Episcopacy for work in their mission fields. God has showed by the glorious result achieved by the society since 1707 that it is to the Bishops as the successors of the Apostles that He has given in a special way the power of His Spirit and promised the blessing of His special presence. "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the ends of the world."

Brethren, the foundations which God builds are not seen by men but they are none the less real and vital. Men knowing only what they see or what they experience often mistake the delicious fruit for the true tree that bears the fruit. The fruit of the Gospel is the salvation of individual souls, but the tree which has produced this fruit in greatest abundance, for the longest period, in every country, in spite of every opposition that Satan can devise, is the Historic Episcopate or Apostolic Succession.

The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, while it has kept to the front its desire for the fruits of the Gospel, the Salvation of Souls, has not forgotten the tree, the Ancient Episcopate. From the beginning the society has been under the Bishops and beloved in the Bishops, and as such deserves the hearty and generous support of every loyal churchman.